

**Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
November 16, 2004**

Update on Process and Goals for this Meeting

The focus of this meeting was to finalize initial input and recommendations from the group regarding the review and revision of the *Beyond 2000 Solid Waste Master Plan* (Master Plan).

DEP has not yet developed any proposals for revising the Master Plan and will develop an initial proposal for discussion at the January 27, 2005 SWAC meeting. DEP's schedule calls for issuing a draft plan for public comment and hearings in Spring 2005 and issuing a final revised plan by July 2005.

Facility Siting

The group discussed capacity development, specifically how to get more needed facilities sited while still addressing local concerns. The discussion focused on increasing recycling and composting capacity, particularly for food waste, paper, and certain construction and demolition material streams. Comments from the group included:

- There is a glaring need for objective information at site assignment hearings; DEP staff should attend site assignment meetings to at least support the factual data in their Site Suitability Report determination.
- DEP should provide local Boards of Health and Health Agents with guidance on their authority and role with respect to solid waste facilities (some Boards do not realize they have enforcement authority) and also educate them about those facilities and how they relate to the state's policy goals.
- DEP and project proponents should consider involving local officials and concerned residents earlier in the site assignment process, when the project proponent is developing an application for Site Suitability.
- For DEP's determinations to be trusted by community groups, it is critical that DEP devote the needed time and resources to thoroughly review site assignment applications and prepare site suitability reports. There is some concern that DEP may not be able to do this with its existing staff levels.
- DEP should require that notice of a property's site assignment be recorded on the deeds of abutting undeveloped/developed land to indicate what type of facility the land abuts (as a notice to prospective buyers).
- A permit by rule approach for siting some facilities should be adopted to expedite the process by removing non-technical/political issues while still protecting public health and the environment.
- Unless the site assignment process and authority is changed dramatically, it is unlikely that significant new capacity will be developed and approved. If this is the case, then DEP should explicitly change state planning to recognize that waste will be transferred out of state due to limited in-state capacity.

Increasing Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Composting

The group also discussed what strategies DEP could implement to increase waste reduction, including how partnerships could be used to leverage additional resources and increase program effectiveness. Comments from participants included:

- Recycling facilities should consider accepting and managing special waste as a means to increase facility profitability to support other less profitable waste streams.
- Paper recycling markets, which drive recycling economics because of large paper tonnages, are expected to be high for many years due to increased demand, especially from China. This provides great opportunities for municipalities and businesses to recycle cost effectively.
- Participants continued to express support for product stewardship initiatives that would reduce burdens and costs for state government, local government, and the solid waste industry. In particular, the group discussed and expressed support for legislation on mercury containing products and electronics.
- DEP should emphasize Pay-As-You-Throw as a major waste reduction strategy. However, some participants wanted to know more about PAYT and requested that presentations be provided at a future SWAC meeting on the challenges of PAYT and how they are addressed at the local level.
- If mandatory PAYT legislation were developed, it would need to ensure that it did not pose an unfunded mandate to local governments.
- DEP should partner with the media as much as possible to get its message across to the general public regarding recycling and composting.
- Related to this effort, the waste reduction goal is difficult to explain to the general public and it would be easier to communicate if a specific recycling goal(s) were identified.

Toxicity of the Waste Stream

The third issue discussed by meeting attendees was reducing the toxicity of the waste stream. Comments from the group included:

- Participation in municipal and regional collection events has decreased over the past year. This may be because most products in homes already have been brought to local HHP collection events, decreasing participation.
- However, it was suggested that many more households may not be using this local service and may still have hazardous products stored in their homes. It was recommended that DEP should focus outreach to residents when they are moving, and perhaps establish some type of requirement that homeowners clean out and safely dispose of stored hazardous products prior to moving.
- DEP should support legislation and producer responsibility/product stewardship requirements to decrease toxicity in the waste stream.
- Low-level radioactive waste may be becoming an issue, especially with the advent of new medications and drug therapies used by patients at home. DEP should coordinate with the Department of Public Health and the health care industry to address management of these materials, as well as other medical waste streams, such as sharps.

Meeting Handouts

- Meeting Agenda and Discussion Questions
- Consolidated Comments from October 6, 20, and November 4, 2004 Meetings

Next SWAC Meeting

The next SWAC Meeting is scheduled for Thursday January 27, 2005, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at DEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA.